The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives a brief summary of important matters affecting labor, occurring in the industrial, legislative and judicial fields, and such other information that will benefit the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

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If you think co-operation isn't necessary, watch what happens when a wheel comes off.

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JINGOES AT OLD GAME IN ROW WITH MEXICO

Washington, Jan. 16.—Will the country be lashed into a frenzy by shouts that "Communists control Mexico," because that country is striving to control its natural resources?

Differences of opinion have arisen between the United States and the southern Republic. Diplomats are striving to adjust the dispute and it is hoped this policy will prove successful. Certain jingo newspapers, however, are libeling Mexico.

Mexico has passed two laws, based on article 27 of the Mexican constitution, which provide that only Mexicans, by birth or naturalization, have the right to acquire ownership in that country's natural resources.

Foreigners may exploit these resources provided they agree to invoke the protection of Mexican courts rather than their own government, in the event of a dispute.

The law also provides that "within a zone of 100 kilometers from the (Mexican) frontiers and of 50 kilometers from the seacoast, no foreigner shall, under any conditions, acquire direct ownership of land and waters."

The American government insists that these laws are retroactive and are in violation of certain understandings between the two countries.

MODEL STATE-USE BILL TO BE URGED BY LABOR

Washington, Jan. 16.—A copy of a model bill that will provide for the state-use system of convict labor has been forwarded to state federations and city central bodies by President Green. He suggests that the bill be presented in legislatures of states where the state-use system is not established.

Congress will be asked to pass a bill providing that the various states may enact laws prohibiting the transportation within their borders of convict-made products from other states.

"If every state adopts a state-use law, and congress enacts the law referred to this will be a long step toward solving the convict-labor problem," said President Green.

"The model state-use bill governs every phase of the production of goods in penal institutions. These goods can not be sold on the market but must be manufactured exclusively for the use of a state or its political subdivisions."

'URGE NEW CONTRACT

New York, Jan. 16.—Organized fur workers have presented a new contract to the Fur Manufacturers' Association. The main features are: A 40-hour work week; 25-hour week during slack season; equal division of work; increase unemployment insurance fund; manufacturers to be penalized for violating contract; 25 per cent wage increase and permission to union representatives to inspect shops.

WAGES-BY-LAW IS AGAIN UPSET

In setting aside the Oklahoma law that contractors on public works shall pay the current wage of that locality, the United States supreme court has again rejected the wages-by-law theory.

The court said that criminal legislation must be drawn in clearly defined terms that are not subject to different interpretations or susceptible of variation by juries.

The court asks:

"Who can say, with any degree of accuracy, what areas constitute the locality where a given piece of work is being done? Two men, moving in any direction from the place of operations, would not be at all likely to agree upon the point where they had passed the boundary which separated the locality of that work from the next locality. The word 'neighborhood' is quite as susceptible of variation as the word 'locality.' Both terms are elastic and, dependent upon circumstances, may be equally satisfied by areas measured by rods or by miles."

The court indicated that even were the boundary of a "locality" defined, as in a municipality, the law would not stand the test, as the words "current rate of wages do not denote a specific or definite sum."

The contractor submitted to the court a list of varying rates that were paid in that locality and the court refused to accept the maximum rate as the "current" wage.

"To construe the phrase 'current rate of wages' as meaning either the lowest rate or the highest rate or any intermediate rate, if it were possible to determine the various factors to be considered in an average of all rates, would be as likely to defeat the purpose of the legislature as to promote it."

Setting wages by law is an alluring proposal to many wage earners. Little effort is supposed to be involved in its enforcement, as the state is expected to punish the violator.

The courts invariably have refused to support the theory and workers are thrown back on their own resources. Even where the theory has not been subjected to court test the political agents of contractors often ignore the law and compel workers to battle for its observance.

Organized labor has been criticised because of its opposition to wages by law, but the supreme court's recent decision in the Arizona minimum wage law and in the present Oklahoma case confound these critics.

TO REGISTER ALL ALIENS MEANS GIGANTIC SPY PLAN

Washington, Jan. 16.—The proposal to register all aliens in this country was declared by Congressman Celler of New York to "bear the characteristics of Prussianism in its meanest form."

Most of these bills provide for a yearly registration of aliens upon the payment of a fee of $5 or more, under penalty or fine of $25 for each year's failure to register, together with the extreme penalty of deportation in certain cases.

"A real police espionage system is embodied therein," said Congressman Celler. "The alien would be under constant surveillance; otherwise, how could the government tell whether the 7,000,000 aliens had registered? They would be stopped on the street. Their homes would be invaded.

"A vast army of inspectors would be necessary to check up so many persons—7,000,000. They would make life miserable for the alien. There would be fertile fields for oppression and graft. The alien flying from the European gendarme now runs into an American gendarme.

"Registration would not detect criminality of the alien, as it is claimed. They would register—they would be too slick not to."

Congressman Celler denied that registration of aliens would bring about education. "Most of our illiteracy is not among aliens; it is among our natives," he said. "United States census figures of 1920 show that nearly two-thirds of our total American illiteracy is to be found among white and negro native-born inhabitants. If education is the goal, then register everyone—alien and citizen alike."

The speaker quoted the last convention of the A. F. of L., which took strong ground against this proposal. The trade unionists said:

"The potential danger of the principle embodied in this (the Aswell) bill is very great. It has all the elements of a strike-crushing, union-breaking proposal.

"It is inconceivable that the American Congress will seriously consider legalizing an elaborate system of espionage such as this measure contemplates. Nevertheless we earnestly urge upon the executive council a continuation of its opposition, so that this dangerous proposition, anti-union and un-American in principle, will not be written into law."

HASTY INJUNCTIONS OPPOSED BY GOVERNOR

Albany, N. Y., Jan. 16.—"This state should declare by law that the labor of a human being is not a commodity or article of commerce," said Governor Al Smith, in his annual message to the New York legislature. The executive opposed the issuance of these writs without hearing of both sides.

"A source of dissatisfaction frequently expressed concerning the courts is the practice which prevails with reference to the issuance of injunctions in labor disputes," said the governor.

"The criticism is made, and in many cases properly so, that preliminary injunctions in these cases are issued on affidavits and without a full and comprehensive knowledge of facts. I need hardly call attention to the importance that these so-called labor injunctions play in our industrial and social life. A better feeling between labor and capital will be brought about if, before such preliminary injunctions are issued, a preliminary hearing is held to establish the facts, and I recommend an amendment along these lines."

So-Called "Conscription Of Capital" Is Nothing But Regulation Of Prices

Washington, Jan. 16.—The Capper-Johnson bill, now pending in congress, and which is alleged to call for the "conscription of capital and labor," is certainly not of the kind, according to views expressed by Secretary of the Navy Wilbur, as stated in a local newspaper.

"Secretary Wilbur is inclined to think," it is said, "that a constitutional amendment would be necessary to enable the president in time of war to commandeer materials at less than the market price."

This sustains the position of opponents of the bill—that it does not "conscript" capital. Instead, it provides for the regulation of prices in "an emergency," while it empowers the president to conscript the nation's man power.

Military experts agree that a country's material resources are part of the national defense, but under the Capper-Johnson bill these resources will be accorded different treatment from the country's man power. The citizen will be assured its interest rates and a "reasonable" profit. Except the prohibition of wild profiteering, there will be no change in the attitude toward capital, while the human portion of the nation's resources will be seized and marched off to the first line trenches.

Friends of this system call it "conscription of labor and capital."

One administration spokesman is so enthusiastic he makes this unsupported statement: "If wealth knew that conscription of wealth was certain, there would be little momentum from that quarter for entering war."

PEACE ON RAILROADS THROUGH MEDIATION

Washington, Jan. 16.—The various railroad organizations of transportation and shop men and railroad managers have written a new page in industrial history by agreeing to support legislation that will abolish the railroad labor board and pave the way for a settlement of disputes.

President Coolidge has approved the plan, and it is believed that congress will quickly assent to this peace effort of the carriers and employes.

Boards of adjustment, composed of representatives of managers and employes, will be created to handle disputes. If unsuccessful, the dispute will then be passed on to a permanent board of mediation. This board will consist of citizens not connected with the industry. If neither of these plans succeed, voluntary arbitration will be resorted to.

No working condition can be changed by the carrier while negotiations are on. If a board of mediation informs the president that a dispute threatens interstate commerce, the president may appoint a board of disinterested citizens to investigate and report within 30 days. In that event, and for 30 days thereafter, neither party can make any change in conditions.

Under the proposed law both parties may choose representatives "without interference, influence or coercion." This will permit the employes to select their representatives and end the practice of certain carriers that insist they name representatives of the workers through company "unions."

FORMER WAGE CONCEPTS REJECTED; LABOR WANTS MORE THAN "LIVING"

Chicago, Ill., Jan. 16.—Wages should not be based on "the cost of living," a "living wage" or a "saving wage," said Wm. Green, president of the A. F. of L., in an address before the Chicago Forum Council.

These bases are intangible, indefinite and impossible to conflicting interpretations, and the developments of modern industry have brought new viewpoints, he said.

"People are discarding the old theory of wages based upon a fluctuating labor market that is governed by the law of competition and supply and demand. Society has found that the old concept of low wages and reduced costs must be changed to the new concept of high wages, efficiency, elimination of waste and increased production as a means through which lower costs in commodity production can be accomplished.

"Wages must be maintained upon a high level so that the masses' purchasing power will correspond with the producing power of the workers. Unless this principle is recognized and accepted the worker will find himself penalized because of his genius, skill, efficiency and faithfulness."

President Green said that the amazing mechanical development of the present age has increased the productive power of labor, and that the workers are now asking a share in this increased efficiency and productivity.

"Labor's reward," he said, "should not be merely enough to meet the requirements of the family budget, but it should be representative in full measure of labor's contribution to industry. This shifts the whole wage bases from the places where it has been erroneously placed, namely, the cost of living, a living wage, or a saving wage."

FOOD COSTS GO UP

Washington, Jan. 16.—Food prices increased the past year in 26 cities reporting to the United States bureau of labor statistics. Atlanta and Cincinnati led with a 13 per cent advance. Omaha was next with 12 per cent, followed by Philadelphia and St. Paul, 11 per cent; Indianapolis, Kansas City, New Haven and Peoria, 10 per cent; Boston, Bridgeport, Columbus, Louisville, Manchester and Rochester, 9 per cent; Cleveland, Fall River, Memphis, New York, Providence, Washington and Portland, Me., 8 per cent; Charleston, S. C., and Little Rock, 7 per cent; Dallas and Salt Lake City, 4 per cent.

WILL COAL MINES BE MADE MORE DEADLY?

Philadelphia business men have petitioned Governor Pinchot to oppose the Pennsylvania miners' certificate law, which provides for a competency examination of these workers.

The business men say this law permits the union to maintain a monopoly.

It is significant that the operators do not demand repeal of the law.

Anthracite mining calls for a high degree of skill. Miners must know how to discover gas, how to handle peculiar formations of this coal, and how to timber—to prop—roofs of coal that life is protected and the product is not wasted.

Before the certificate law was passed these mines were slaughter holes, and the killings developed a strong public opinion against the employment of incompetents, who would blow a mine and its employees to pieces.

"The miners look no part in the agitation for a state test of competency because they were unorganized. They had no collective voice.

Were it possible to repeal the law it is doubtful if a single operator would assent. Loss of life and property would make the proposal too costly, even if unorganized, unskilled workers would accept any wage the employer set.

In short, no one who has the slightest knowledge of anthracite mining favors the employment of unskilled mine workers.

Before the certificate law they destroyed mines and everyone therein. Ignorance would again exact the same toll.

Higher Awards For Injury Urged; Gov. Smith Makes Strong Appeal

Albany, N. Y., Jan. 16.—Increased compensation for injured workers was recommended by Governor Al Smith, in his annual message.

"Changed conditions raise serious question as to the justice of the present maximum limit of weekly compensation of $20 a week," he said. "Since that limit was fixed the level of wages has risen so much that it has brought a far larger number of injured employes into the class of those who receive something less than the standard allowance of two-thirds of wages for compensation than it can be said it was intended should be so treated when that limit was set up.

"Today more than one-third of all injured employes who are compensated receive less than two-thirds wage as a result of this $20 maximum. Bearing in mind that the cost of living has risen as well as wages, it is apparent that the existing limit today results in a large number of wage earners in a lower degree of relief from the financial loss occasioned by accidents than was intended by the law when that limit was fixed.

"An increase of this limit would seem to be a necessary readjustment to the change in the economic condition of wage earners since the $20 maximum was established, so that prosperity may not paradoxically involve for many employes a lowering of the proportion of relief in time of disability to the extent afforded by the compensation law. Just how much the increase should be to make the proper adjustment is a matter of judgment. But an increase to at least $25 per week would certainly not be too much."

PICTURE SHOW WINS; PLAYS TO CAPACITY

Washington, Jan. 16.—The moving picture unit of the A. F. of L. organization and educational campaign now touring Ohio is playing to capacity houses, according to information received by John J. Manning, secretary-treasurer of the A. F. of L. union label trades department.

In Youngstown two shows were put on, but more than 500 people were unable to gain admittance.

At Bellaire and East Liverpool two shows failed to satisfy the people. At Warren 14 inches of snow did not interfere with a packed house. Capacity crowds saw the picture in Niles, Mt. Vernon and other cities.

Reports from Michigan carry the same story. At Jackson the largest high school auditorium was filled. The same is true of Battle Creek and Muskegon. At Kalamazoo the doors of the theater had to be locked during the first performance and an extra exhibition was necessary.

WORKERS HELPLESS IN ALABAMA MINES

Indianapolis, Jan. 16.—The death of 53 miners in the non-union mine at Cordova, Alabama, is not unusual, says the United Mine Workers' Journal. "It is not strange that these disasters happen so frequently in Alabama. The only wonder is that they are not more numerous.

"Coal mining in that state is conducted along feudal lines. The employe has no rights that the employer is bound to respect. These workers are required to take their lives in their hands and assume all risk. Experienced and trained men are obliged to work together, thus placing the real miner in constant danger because of the lack of knowledge on the part of green men. That state works convicts in its mines. Many of these men never saw a coal mine until they were herded in one to work not for the state, but for some private corporation, under a lease.

"Human life is the cheapest thing in the non-union coal mines of Alabama. It is cheap because the companies are able to fill their mines with a class of southern labor that can not help itself.

"The condition of these men is pitiable. The United Mine Workers of America has spent many hundreds of thousands of dollars in efforts to improve the conditions of the miners of Alabama, but every time the union bids fair to achieve some good in that direction the powerful influence of every big interest that thrives on the exploitation of labor says the word that drives the union from the state. Every effort to rescue these miners from their miserable bondage is down defeated.

"The coal mining fields of Alabama is one of the darkest industrial spots in America, and this because the miners' union is not permitted to enter."

TRUCK REGULATION OPPOSED BY UNION

Indianapolis, Jan. 16.—Placing interstate motor trucks under control of the Interstate Commerce Commission is about the limit in governmental interference, declared President Tobin of the Brotherhood of Teamsters, as truck-regulation bill is pending in congress. The union executive intimates that the railroads are behind this proposal which would compel the owner of a truck carrying goods across a river that separates two states to go to Washington if he would change rates by fraction of a cent.

"A wage increase could not be considered by the truck owners because their profits would be regulated and before granting an increase the commission would have to permit an increase in rates," said he, on down the line," said President Tobin.

If the commission is given this power, Mr. Tobin pointed out, "Amendments and other amendments will be adopted and rules will be laid down by the commission which will make it pretty difficult for the truck owner to cross from one state to another."

The truck men favor common regulation of railroads and truck owners, the trade unionist said. The former is large combinations, extending hundreds of miles.

WANT LONG WORK WEEK

Boston, Jan. 16.—Mill owners of this state have presented a women's 54-hour bill to the state senate. Children under 21 would be permitted to work nine hours a day, and 48 hours a week. Mills, telegraph offices, telephone exchanges, railroads and express companies.

GRAIN TAX HELD VOID

Washington, Jan. 16.—The federal grain future tax, passed by congress in 1921, has been set aside by the United States supreme court. The law was intended to check gambling in wheat, and provided for a tax of 20 cents a bushel. The court said this was a penalty, not a tax.

Trade Unions Don't Limit Wages; U. S. Bureau Upholds This Claim

Washington, Jan. 16.—The United States bureau of labor statistics refutes the claim of anti-unionists that organized labor limits output of its members or that they are held "to a dead level."

After investigating thousands of agreements made in 1923 and 1924 between employers and trade unions, the bureau says:

"The wages are invariably stated in the agreements, always as a minimum, however, and higher wages are rarely forbidden."

The bureau does not indicate what organizations take this exceptional position, although trade unions often put a limit on piecework that work may be equalized. This differs from limiting straight wages.

This reference to wages is included in bulletin No. 393, which is the most extensive summary of trade union agreements yet issued. Extracts from agreements in the leading industries in 1923 and 1924 tend to show what matters are considered of vital importance in each.

The number of such agreements made annually, it is stated, is unknown, "but as the attention of the bureau was called to upward of 4,000 in 1923 and 1924, it is evident that their number must be very large, and that only a very small percentage of them can appear in a bulletin of this character."

The bureau had 14,000 of these agreements at the close of 1924.

"Many unions, probably the majority of them, have no written agreements. They have simply a verbal understanding among their members, which is very generally observed. Frequently the union passes by-laws or working rules which include many items ordinarily incorporated into agreements, and members are expected to observe them in working for employers. In fact, such by-laws are often submitted to employers for their approval, and even when this is done many employers recognize them in the nature of agreements. Indeed, many agreements contain references thereto, incorporating such by-laws or working rules.

"There is no uniform method of making agreements. Likewise these agreements are variously accepted by employers. Frequently, however, they are signed by groups of employers. There is scarcely a provision common to all agreements, but the most general is the union-shop provision. The eight-hour day is very generally observed, and the 44-hour week is practically the rule in the building trades and in many other unions."

PILE UP PROFITS; WOULD LOWER WAGE

Willimantic, Conn., Jan. 16.—More than 2,000 wage workers continue their strike against the wage-reducing policy of the American Thread company. Since its organization this concern has doubled its original capitalization of $6,000,000. Its record is one of amazing profits. The common stock is owned by the English sewing cotton company (Ltd.) of Great Britain.

After donating an extra share of stock for every original share the earnings for five years on this common stock are as follows: 1919, 25 per cent; 1920, 80 per cent; 1921, 21 per cent; 1923, 31 per cent; 1924, 21 per cent. The company controls the cotton-thread industry.

The United Textile Workers is directing the fight to protect standards of these workers, 80 per cent of whom are women. They are housed and fed by the union and are as determined as when they ceased work last March.

Industrial Accidents Drop Slowly; Boom and Slack Periods Is Factor

New York, Jan. 16.—Industrial activity and slack periods are reflected in the record of industrial accidents, according to figures issued by the Metropolitan Life Insurance company. It is shown that the death rate for all industrial accidents in 1913 was 45.7 per 100,000 persons. The war year of 1918 claimed 40.9 per 100,000, while the figures dropped to 28.8 during the slack year of 1921.

Despite the development of work-men's compensation insurance and the accompanying development of industrial safety work, and the rise of industrial medicine and surgery, the insurance company asks: "Are fatal industrial accidents decreasing?"

The company's statistics show that the death rate for all accidents combined decreased about 1 per cent per annum for the period 1912 to 1924. The death rate for machinery accidents combined decreased about 1 per cent per annum for the period 1912 to 1924. The death rate for machinery accidents in industry declined slightly, about 1¼ per cent per year.

"The increase in accidents in any given year may be due to increased activity in times of boom and expansion," the company says. "Men in industry, working under stress for maximum production, do not exercise the thought and care that would be used in slack times. The fluctuation in the number of men employed, as well as the intensity of industrial activity, also definitely influences the industrial accident rate. The general trend of accidents in industry is affected by the introduction of labor-saving devices, that is, by the substitution of mechanical for manual processes. Little attention has been given to this latter factor in industrial studies."

NEW YORK EDUCATOR URGES TOLERANCE

New York, Jan. 16.—We live in an age of barbaric intolerance in which heretics are punished by force and people are burned at the stake, Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia university, told 800 college students at a meeting in this city.

"Only the weak and intolerant have constant recourse to compel those they can not persuade or convince," the educator said. "We are surrounded by intolerance on every hand. Minorities are thrown out. Men are hounded for their convictions and the weak or defenseless are hanged by mobs or burned at the stake." Such practices, he declared, were "instruments of barbarism."

MEXICAN PRINTERS UNITE

El Paso, Texas, Jan. 16.—Mexican printers have organized and are chartered by the International Typographical union.

ALUMINUM TRUST HANDLED GENTLY

Washington, Jan. 16.—Attorney General Sargent told the senate judiciary committee that he knows nothing of what his department has done in the alleged violation of the anti-trust law by the aluminum trust, of which Secretary of the Treasury Mellon and his brother are the principal owners.

The next day the attorney general reversed his testimony. He told the committee he had forgotten that last March he signed an order directing an inquiry into the Aluminum company.

In his first testimony the attorney general said the entire matter is in the hands of subordinates, in whom he has confidence. "Personally, I have nothing," he said. He could not remember how much of the Federal Trade Commission's hearings against the aluminum trust he had read nor could he recall when the matter first came to his department. Neither could he recall that his department has had any correspondence with the Federal Trade Commission. He has relied wholly on his subordinates and is so trustful of them that he knows nothing of their methods in prosecuting the case. He also said he did not know Secretary Mellon was connected with the aluminum trust "until he read it in the papers."

APPEAL FOR SACCO BEFORE HIGH COURT

Boston, Jan. 16.—The state supreme court is considering an appeal by Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, citizens of Italy, who are under sentence of death for the murder in connection with a shoe company paymaster and his guard in 1920.

The accused insist they are victims of a frame-up because they are "radicals." A number of witnesses swore that the accused were several miles from South Braintree at the time of the murders. Two conventions of the A. F. of L. insisted that the feeling against Sacco and Bartolomeo, together with their alibis, warrant a retrial.

AUSTRALIAN UNIONS ROUTED BY EMPLOYERS' HOARY TRICK

San Francisco, Jan. 16.—The recent political rout of Australian trade unionists emphasizes (what) history repeats, says the Seamen's Journal. Editor Scharrenberg, because they "lacked the courage to repudiate an extreme radical and irresponsible brand of unionism sponsored and practiced by certain of the transportation groups."

The labor editor quotes from the Queensland Worker, published in Brisbane, Queensland, which points to the ease with which employers used a noisy anarchistic minority to divide the workers and terrify the public.

"One great lesson," says the Brisbane Worker, is "that the labor movement should learn from this campaign and its result is that, although it is quite impossible to defeat it from without, it is a comparatively easy thing for the capitalists to defeat the movement from within.

"It becomes ever more apparent, and this election emphasizes the fact, that the labor movement needs tightening up in many ways in order that the operations of capitalism from the inside of the movement itself may be frustrated.

"The need for a stricter discipline is screamingly evident right through. We are too prone to accept at his face value any individual who comes along, and to see in such fire-eater a militant, when he is merely a common scab. The movement, for some reason or other, is too prone to pass over and to forgive breaches of discipline, and while forgiveness and toleration are splendid attributes, they become absurdities and inanities when they are continually opening the door to the agencies of our opponents."

Editor Scharrenberg reminds his readers that American trade unionists do not have to look to Australia, Russia or other foreign countries for examples of how fire-eaters and so-called militants divide the ranks of labor.

In our own country, he says, "the history of the labor movement is replete with many humiliating failures dns directly to the application of widely heralded panaceas. There is abundant evidence right at home that progress has been secured only through methods untarnished by the acid test."